

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 19-0995V

UNPUBLISHED

CHRISTINE LARSEN,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

Chief Special Master Corcoran

Filed: February 13, 2023

Special Processing Unit (SPU); Joint
Stipulation on Damages; Influenza
(Flu) Vaccine; Guillain-Barre
Syndrome (GBS)

*Paul G. Krentz, Kinnally Flaherty Krentz Loran Hodge & Masur, Aurora, IL, for
Petitioner.*

Zoe Wade, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Respondent.

DECISION ON JOINT STIPULATION¹

On July 11, 2019, Christine Larsen filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*² (the “Vaccine Act”). Petitioner alleges that she suffered Guillain-Barre Syndrome (“GBS”) as a result of an influenza vaccine received on October 24, 2018. Petition at 1; Stipulation, filed February 13, 2023, at ¶¶ 2-4. Petitioner further alleges the vaccine was administered in the United States, she suffered the sequela of her injury for more than six months, and there has been no prior award or settlement of a civil action for damages on her behalf as a result of her condition. Petition at ¶¶ 2, 46-48; Stipulation at ¶¶ 3, 5.

The stipulation states:

¹ Because this unpublished Decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, I am required to post it on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2012) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). **This means the Decision will be available to anyone with access to the internet.** In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), Petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, I agree that the identified material fits within this definition, I will redact such material from public access.

² National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755. Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all section references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2012).

On August 28, 2020, respondent filed a Rule 4(c) Report recommending compensation based on the medical records available at that time, which supported a diagnosis of Guillain Barre Syndrome (“GBS”). ECF No. 29. On August 31, 2020, the Chief Special Master issued a ruling on entitlement, finding petitioner was entitled to compensation for a GBS Table injury. ECF No. 40. Based on a review of medical records filed subsequent to the Chief Special Master’s ruling on entitlement, on February 28, 2022, respondent filed his amended Rule 4(c) Report recommending that compensation be denied. ECF No. 71. Respondent continues to maintain this contrary position but will not seek review of the Chief Special Master’s ruling on entitlement upon its memorialization as a reviewable decision.

Stipulation at ¶ 4.

Nevertheless, on February 13, 2023, the parties filed the attached joint stipulation, stating, “[t]he parties now agree that the issues between them shall be settled and that a decision should be entered awarding the compensation described in paragraph 7 of this Stipulation.” Stipulation at ¶ 6. I find the stipulation reasonable and adopt it as my decision awarding damages, on the terms set forth therein.

Pursuant to the terms stated in the attached Stipulation, I award the following compensation:

- **A lump sum of \$400,000.00 in the form of a check payable to Petitioner;**
and
- **An amount sufficient to purchase the annuity contract described in paragraph 9 of the stipulation, paid to the life insurance company from which the annuity will be purchased.**

Stipulation at ¶ 7. These amounts represents compensation for all items of damages that would be available under Section 15(a). *Id.*

I approve the requested amount for Petitioner’s compensation. In the absence of a motion for review filed pursuant to RCFC Appendix B, the Clerk of Court is directed to enter judgment in accordance with this decision.³

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Brian H. Corcoran

Brian H. Corcoran
Chief Special Master

³ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), entry of judgment can be expedited by the parties’ joint filing of notice renouncing the right to seek review.

THE UNITED STATES COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

CHRISTINE LARSEN,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

No. 19-995V
Chief Special Master Corcoran
ECF

STIPULATION

The parties hereby stipulate to the following matters:

1. Christine Larsen (“petitioner”) filed a petition for vaccine compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-10 to -34 (the “Vaccine Program”). The petition seeks compensation for injuries allegedly related to petitioner’s receipt of an influenza (“flu”) vaccine, which vaccine is contained in the Vaccine Injury Table (the “Table”), 42 C.F.R. § 100.3 (a).
2. Petitioner received a flu vaccination on October 24, 2018.
3. The vaccination was administered within the United States.
4. On August 28, 2020, respondent filed a Rule 4(c) Report recommending compensation based on the medical records available at that time, which supported a diagnosis of Guillain Barré Syndrome (“GBS”). ECF No. 29. On August 31, 2020, the Chief Special Master issued a ruling on entitlement, finding petitioner was entitled to compensation for a GBS Table injury. ECF No. 40. Based on a review of medical records filed subsequent to the Chief Special Master’s ruling on entitlement, on February 28, 2022, respondent filed his amended Rule 4(c)

Report recommending that compensation be denied. ECF No. 71. Respondent continues to maintain this contrary position but will not seek review of the Chief Special Master's ruling on entitlement upon its memorialization as a reviewable decision.

5. Petitioner represents that there has been no prior award or settlement of a civil action for damages on her behalf as a result of her condition.

6. The parties now agree that the issues between them shall be settled and that a decision should be entered awarding the compensation described in paragraph 7 of this Stipulation.

7. As soon as practicable after an entry of judgment reflecting a decision consistent with the terms of this Stipulation, and after petitioner has filed an election to receive compensation pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-21(a)(1), the Secretary of Health and Human Services will issue the following vaccine compensation payments:

- a. A lump sum of \$400,000.00, in the form of a check payable to petitioner; and
- b. An amount sufficient to purchase the annuity contract described in paragraph 9 below, paid to the life insurance company from which the annuity will be purchased (the "Life Insurance Company").

These amounts represent compensation for all damages that are available under 42 U.S.C. §300aa-15(a).

8. The Life Insurance Company must have a minimum of \$250,000,000 capital and surplus, exclusive of any mandatory security valuation reserve. The Life Insurance Company must have one of the following ratings from two of the following rating organizations:

- a. A.M. Best Company: A++, A+, A+g, A+p, A+r, or A+s;
- b. Moody's Investor Service Claims Paying Rating: Aa3, Aa2, Aa1, or Aaa;
- c. Standard and Poor's Corporation Insurer Claims-Paying Ability Rating: AA-, AA, AA+, or AAA;
- d. Fitch Credit Rating Company, Insurance Company Claims Paying Ability Rating:

AA-, AA, AA+, or AAA.

9. The Secretary of Health and Human Services agrees to purchase an annuity contract from the Life Insurance Company for the benefit of petitioner, Christine Larsen, pursuant to which the Life Insurance Company will agree to make payments periodically to petitioner as follows for the following items of compensation:

For future unreimbursable projected life care expenses, beginning on the first anniversary of the date of judgment, an annual amount of \$30,500.00 to be paid for the remainder of petitioner's life, increasing at the rate of three percent (3%), compounded annually from the date of judgment.

At the sole discretion of the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the periodic payments set forth in paragraph 9 above may be provided to petitioner in monthly, quarterly, annual or other installments. The "annual amounts" set forth above describe only the total yearly sum to be paid to petitioner and do not require that the payment be made in one annual installment. Petitioner will continue to receive the annuity payments from the Life Insurance Company only so long as she, Christine Larsen, is alive at the time that a particular payment is due. Written notice shall be provided to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Life Insurance Company within twenty (20) days of Christine Larsen's death.

10. The annuity contract will be owned solely and exclusively by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and will be purchased as soon as practicable following the entry of a judgment in conformity with this Stipulation. The parties stipulate and agree that the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the United States of America are not responsible for the payment of any sums other than the amounts set forth in paragraph 7 herein and the amounts awarded pursuant to paragraph 11 herein, and that they do not guarantee or insure any of the future annuity payments. Upon the purchase of the annuity contract, the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the United States of America are released from any and all obligations with

respect to future annuity payments.

11. As soon as practicable after the entry of judgment on entitlement in this case, and after petitioner has filed both a proper and timely election to receive compensation pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-21(a)(1), and an application, the parties will submit to further proceedings before the special master to award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred in proceeding upon this petition.

12. Petitioner and her attorney represent that they have identified to respondent all known sources of payment for items or services for which the Program is not primarily liable under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(g), including State compensation programs, insurance policies, Federal or State health benefits programs (other than Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 1396 et seq.)), or entities that provide health services on a pre-paid basis.

13. Payments made pursuant to paragraph 7 and any amounts awarded pursuant to paragraph 11 of this Stipulation will be made in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(i), subject to the availability of sufficient statutory funds.

14. The parties and their attorneys further agree and stipulate that, except for any award for attorneys' fees and litigation costs, and past unreimbursable expenses, the money provided pursuant to this Stipulation either immediately or as part of the annuity contract, will be used solely for petitioner's benefit as contemplated by a strict construction of 42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-15(a) and (d), and subject to the conditions of 42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-15(g) and (h).

15. In return for the payments described in paragraphs 7 and 11, petitioner, in her individual capacity, and on behalf of her heirs, executors, administrators, successors or assigns, does forever irrevocably and unconditionally release, acquit and discharge the United States and the Secretary of Health and Human Services from any and all actions or causes of action

(including agreements, judgments, claims, damages, loss of services, expenses and all demands of whatever kind or nature) that have been brought, could have been brought, or could be timely brought in the Court of Federal Claims, under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-10 et seq., on account of, or in any way growing out of, any and all known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected personal injuries to or death of petitioner resulting from, or alleged to have resulted from, the flu vaccination administered on October 24, 2018, as alleged by petitioner in a petition for vaccine compensation filed on or about July 11, 2019, in the United States Court of Federal Claims as petition No. 19-995V.

16. If petitioner should die prior to entry of judgment, this agreement shall be voidable upon proper notice to the Court on behalf of either or both of the parties.

17. If the special master fails to issue a decision in complete conformity with the terms of this Stipulation or if the Court of Federal Claims fails to enter judgment in conformity with a decision that is in complete conformity with the terms of this Stipulation, then the parties' settlement and this Stipulation shall be voidable at the sole discretion of either party.

18. This Stipulation expresses a full and complete negotiated settlement of liability and damages claimed under the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, as amended, except as otherwise noted in paragraph 11 above. There is absolutely no agreement on the part of the parties hereto to make any payment or to do any act or thing other than is herein expressly stated and clearly agreed to. The parties further agree and understand that the award described in this Stipulation may reflect a compromise of the parties' respective positions as to liability and/or amount of damages, and further, that a change in the nature of the injury or condition or in the items of compensation sought, is not grounds to modify or revise this agreement.

19. Petitioner hereby authorizes respondent to disclose documents filed by petitioner in this case consistent with the Privacy Act and the routine uses described in the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program System of Records, No. 09-15-0056.

20. This Stipulation shall not be construed as an admission by the United States or the Secretary of Health and Human Services that the flu vaccine caused petitioner's alleged GBS or any other injury or her current condition.

21. All rights and obligations of petitioner hereunder shall apply equally to petitioner's heirs, executors, administrators, successors, and/or assigns.

END OF STIPULATION

Respectfully submitted,

PETITIONER:


CHRISTINE LARSEN

**ATTORNEY OF RECORD FOR
PETITIONER:**


PAUL G. KRENTZ, ESQ.
Kinnally Flaherty Krentz Loran Hodge
& Masur PC
2114 Deerpath Road
Aurora, IL 60506-7945
Tel: (630) 907-0909
Email: PKrentz@kfkllaw.com

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:**


HEATHER L. PEARLMAN
Deputy Director
Torts Branch
Civil Division
U.S. Department of Justice
P.O. Box 146
Benjamin Franklin Station
Washington, DC 20044-0146

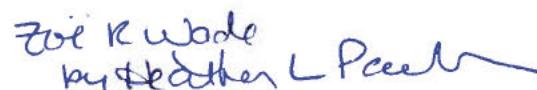
**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES:**

Henry P.
McMillan -S3

Digitally signed by Henry P.
McMillan -S3
Date: 2023.02.03 09:22:34 -05'00'

CDR GEORGE REED GRIMES, MD, MPH
Director, Division of Injury
Compensation Programs
Health Systems Bureau
Health Resources and Services
Administration
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane, 08N146B
Rockville, MD 20857

**ATTORNEY OF RECORD FOR
RESPONDENT:**


ZOË R. WADE
Trial Attorney
Torts Branch
Civil Division
U.S. Department of Justice
P.O. Box 146
Benjamin Franklin Station
Washington, DC 20044-0146
Tel: (202) 616-4118
Zoe.Wade@usdoj.gov

Dated: February 13, 2023